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C.C. James

A Bouquet

OF

SONNETS

25c.

FOR

Thoughtful Moments.

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PREFACE.

The following Sonnets are the fruits of "half-hour meditations" by the writer on the various themes dwelt upon. They are all subjects worthy of an abler handling than my poor pen can give them, as the spare hours of "a printer" are "like angels' visits, few and far between." Should these simple lines however, lead others to enlarge on thoughts thus briefly expressed, my time will not have been mis-spent.

Yours sincerely,

JOHN IMRIE.

TORONTO, ONT.

WHAT IS JOY?

JOY is the constant outflow of a heart
Full of its happiness and ecstacy!
Pure as a mountain spring; born to impart
Its healthy sweetness o'er life's dusty way!
Refreshing hearts o'erfraught with worldly care—
Laughing and skipping like a child at play,
Wooing the flowers that seem to it most fair—
No morrow clouds the brightness of to-day!
Joy is the language that the angels know,
And teach the infant at its mother's breast,
Whose dimpled cheeks with fun and smiles overflow,
While fondled safely in the parent nest!
Joy! like the music of the birds in spring,
Makes other hearts with joyous rapture sing!

FREEDOM.

FREEDOM is obedience to righteous law
Framed for the guidance of a nation great;
Made to be kept—not broken by a flaw
Known only to the rulers of the State!
Justice that treats the rich and poor alike,
Defending each from favor or attack;
Slow to convict—yet ready aye to strike
The fatal blow on all that honor lack!
A nation's strength is measured by her laws;
Her safety is the welfare of her sons;
Industry and loyalty the power that draws
In peace her commerce, and in war her guns!
Freedom—our birthright, sell it not for gold,
Our fathers bought it with their blood of old!

LIBERTY.

SWEET LIBERTY!—thou birthright of mankind,
Yet which some autocrats would fain destroy!
How like our God to give!—like man to take
What God hath given so freely in his love
To make our life on earth more bearable!
Though man loves liberty, yet—miser-like—
Seeks to withhold it from his fellow-man,
And, boasting, pride himself in larceny!
Go to! thou false vile traitor to thy race,
Thy stony heart is index'd on thy face!
While loving Liberty *thyself*—deny
To those within thy power *their* liberty!
The soul that seeks to bind his fellow-man
May soon be measur'd by an infant's span!

TEARS.

TEARS are the outflow of great joy or grief,
The speechless language of a swelling heart,
Whose fitful solace is a sure relief
For joys excessive, or affliction's smart ;
The valve-escapement of a pent-up soul,
Whose fulness finds expression in a tear ;
Which, like healing balm, makes the wounded whole :
Or dearest friend—when darkest hour is near—
Whose hands we clasp in friendship's sacred hold,
And cling to them like ivy round the tree,—
Weakness and strength combined in love's enfold,—
Then let the flood-gates open full and free!
Our bitter tears but give us strength to bear
Affliction sore, or joy's too sudden glare!

WHAT IS LOVE?

LOVE is the grateful offering of a heart
In all its fulness to some counterpart;
Zeal answering zeal, both striving to excel,
Zealous to share the glowing thoughts that dwell
In hearts united by Love's silken bands,
Each thread some joy LOVE only understands!
Mid stirring echoes of a fond desire
Claim kindred feelings and a sister-fire,
Joining life's hopes in one ecstatic song,
As sweetest music from an angel-throng;
No doubt or fear disturbs Love's peaceful rest,
Nor cares corroding rankle in her breast;
Each thought bears fruit in others sweeter still,
Till earth seems heav'n, and heav'n seems own'd at will!

THE IMAGE OF THE HEAVENLY.

ALMIGHTY GOD! in all Thy works display'd,
For man in Thine own image Thou hast made;
How should we, then, Thine every law respect,
And mourn in dust and ashes if neglect
Of ours should once but mar that Image bright,
And, grieving Thee, turn sunshine into night!
Let not our hearts from Thee be turn'd aside,
But may Thy Holy Spirit with us 'bide;
Then shall our life be like the flowers in June;
Displaying sweetness, and our hearts in tune
To the rich melody of gladsome song,
Which to the ransom'd hosts of Heav'n belong:
Thus, here below, let glorious anthems rise
And mingle with the songs of Paradise.

FRIENDSHIP.

FRIENDSHIP! thou holy bond that binds my heart
To others that to mine seem counterpart,—
Love-giving, yet love-getting all the more,
Thus daily adding to our mutual store
Of kindly deeds and words, each thought and look
As readable and clear as printed book;
Enjoyable in life's gay, golden hour,
Yet doubly so when clouds of trial lower;
Then closer draw, as lambs do in the fold,
To gather heat, and 'scape the rain and cold;
Till warmth and sunshine take the place of rain,
Then off they gambol on the hills again!
Oh! Friendship! thou art like a golden chain,
Each link a friend—each friend a golden gain!

"FAITH, HOPE AND CHARITY."

FAITH is the starting-point to higher ground,
Each step—sure-footed—on THE ROCK is found;
No backward gazing at our former fears,
But stronger growing as recede the years!
HOPE is the telescope that scans afar,—
Each heavenly thought seems like a new-found star!
Though for a season bound by earth's employ,
Hope sings on earth sweet heavenly songs of joy!
SWEET CHARITY! true bond of love and peace,
Thy kindly counsel maketh strife to cease;
Thou rulest with a loving, gentle hand,
And, smiling, points us to the better land!
FAITH, HOPE, and CHARITY! oh, truth sublime,
"These three" shall bridge us o'er the sea of Time!

CHRISTMAS GIFTS.

OH! happy eve! that ushers in the day
Of all the year the best to young and old!
This night our thoughts take wings and soar away
To Bethlehem's plains, where shepherds tend their fold.
Angelic strains are borne upon the wind
Of "peace on earth, good-will to all mankind;"
See! yonder star of promise that doth bring
Our eager footsteps to earth's new-born king,
There pay we homage to the Holy Child
Born in a manger—'mid surroundings wild—
Where "wise men from the East" pour at His feet
Earth's finest gold—all spices rare and sweet!
OH! LET OUR CHRISTMAS OFFERINGS EVER BE
A PORTION OF OUR BEST, O LORD, TO THEE!

HEAVENWARD.

THERE is in man a something that would soar
Far from this weary world of toil and pain,
Were he not fondly anchor'd to earth's shore
By tender ties he dare not overstrain!
Stronger they grow as years roll on apace,
Till we would fain make all our Heaven here
Until arrested by God's saving grace,
Won by His love, or driven by conscious fear,
To own the inward monitor that pleads
The birthright of our soul to higher things
More suited to immortal wants and needs!
Then sing we as the rescued captive sings:
Those love their freedom best who once were bound,
Earth's pleasures pall when Heavenly joys are found!

THE PEACE OF GOD.

THERE is a peace the world can not bestow
Nor take away ; and they in joy do go
Who but possess it, for its charm is sure,
And doth through all the ills of life endure ;
It makes the soul rejoice, the weak feel strong,
The timid heart burst forth in joyous song ;
Which may be heard above the din of strife,—
An antidote for all the cares of life!
Oh! peace of God! may I thy power enjoy,
Then in Thy praise my life shall find employ ;
Thou shalt me 'fend from every evil way,
Make all my darkness turn to brightest day,
Till, safe within the everlasting arms,
My soul shall rest secure from all alarms!

VICTORIA'S JUBILEE.

WHAT means this shout of joy o'er all the earth?—
A nation's thankfulness! a nation's praise!
From whence the cause that gives such joy its birth,
And o'er the world such great commotion raise?
For fifty years our noble Queen hath stood
The trying ordeal of a nation's crown!
Beloved by all—"Victoria, the good,"
On Freedom smiled—gave slavery her frown!
All through her lonely years of widowhood
She held with dignity a nation's rein:
Was ever Queen so well-belov'd and good?
Did ever King such lasting homage gain?
Victoria!—as Mother, Queen, or Wife,
Thou hast adorn'd thy pathway all through life!

HOPE DEFERRED!

'TIS hope deferred—life's lamp goes out at night—
One flicker more and all is darkness deep,
Made all the darker as the hopes were bright;
The more of joy we miss the more we weep,
As hope departs and leaves but blank despair,
Then weeping ceases for the lack of power!
The Winter of the soul has come!—and bare
Are all the branches of the tree, whose flower
Gave promise of such benisons of bliss,
That each glad leaf was hailed with new delight
By sun and shower, and dew-drop's hopeful kiss,
And all seemed fair each morning, noon, and night!
But fruit came not; and leaf by leaf decayed;
Then sank my heart and sought Death's grateful shade!

REST!

REST is the peaceful calm succeeding toil;
Sweet to the labouring man who tills the soil;
Likewise most precious to the weary brain,
Tired with the dull routine of loss or gain;
Or to the authors of our learned books,
Who show the trace of study in their looks—
All value rest—all need those quiet hours
As much as doth the plant those welcome show'rs
Which Heaven sends to cool the fever'd earth,
And cause glad Nature sing aloud with mirth.
When God at first created earth and skies,
He "rested" in the shades of Paradise!
Likewise shall we, earth's care and labour o'er,
Find Heaven the sweeter for the toils we bore!

A PRAYER FOR WISDOM.

OH! let me ever walk in Wisdom's way,
That I may wiser grow, and day by day
Prove that her paths are pleasantness and peace;
And, therein walking, may the years increase
In fruitful days of labour and reward,
Of love, and joy, and peace, and sweet concord.
Grant me the work which angels most enjoy,—
A life well spent in Heaven's blest employ,
In deeds of love, and works of holy zeal,
And in that occupation daily feel
The kind approval of a God of grace,
Who owns His servants with a smiling face;
My work accepted, and my sins forgiv'n,
Bless'd while on earth, and doubly bless'd in Heaven!

THE SABBATH-DAY.

SWEET day of rest! most precious of the seven,
God's gracious gift to man, in mercy giv'n
That he may cease from toil and worldly care,
And for that brighter rest his soul prepare.
Blest harbinger of that eternal day,
Whose beams shall never fade or pass away.
Oh, may we ever watch with jealous eye,
And careful guard the hours that swiftly fly,
That nought but heav'nly themes our thoughts engage,
And with temptation hourly warfare wage;
Oft by "the footsteps of the flock" be found,
Within the house of God, on praying ground,
There may our grateful hearts due homage pay,
To Him who rose triumphant on that day!

PAIN!

WE shrink and recoil at the touch of Pain,
Yet know that escape from his grasp is vain;
And our trembling hearts with emotion swell
As we sigh and groan at each painful spell;
But the dreadful hour of suffering past,
And our courage and health restor'd at last,
How soon we forget our terror and pain,
And mingle once more with the world again;
BUT NOT AS BEFORE, for a tender string
Hath been set to music, and thus doth sing:
I have suffered, and feel for others' pain
A twinge of my own past sorrow again!
Ah! Pain, what a useful teacher thou art,
Lessons of sympathy thus to impart!

THE NAME OF JESUS.

SWEET name! what cadence in the very sound!
What heav'nly music in the utterance found,
When whisper'd in the ear of dying saint,
Tho' spent with pain, and pulse and heart-beat faint;
Yet, at the name of "JESUS" doth his eyes
Seek ours in love, and peace, and glad surprise,
And then forever close in sweet content
To open them in Heav'n—a life well spent!
Oh, JESUS! Thine the ever-potent power
To charm, to heal, to bless, in trial's hour;
Let all the world Thy name with rev'rence hear,
And trust Thy pow'r to save; with holy fear
Approach the footstool of Thy matchless grace,
And find in Thee their soul's dear resting-place!

MOTHER-LOVE.

SEE yonder mother with her sickly child
Press'd closely to her heaving, anxious breast,
For many days and nights forebodings wild
Have fill'd her heart and banished needful rest;
Yet, at the faintest cry or wish exprest,
She gladly seeks to soothe its every pain,
And, if successful, thinks it purest gain
Ere to her own great need comes fitful rest!
Oh! mother-love! great waters cannot quench
Nor flames deter thee from thy patient zeal;
Thy love-strong hands grim prison-bars would wrench,
There with thy suffering child "at home" to feel;
The purest love on earth is mother-love,
Full kin to that made manifest above!

THE TEACHER'S REWARD.

OH, teacher, faint not! thou art not alone,
He who hath called thee will thy labour own;
And though, at first, no grateful fruit appear,
Think not 'tis labour lost, but persevere;
Yield not the conflict to the Master's foe,
But still "from strength to strength" unwearied go.
Plant thou the seeds of heav'nly truth with care,
And water oft with fervent, pleading prayer,
Then leave the rest to God, whose Spirit's pow'r
Shall cause the seed to grow, the plant to flow'r,
Till in due course the ripen'd fruit appears
To cheer thy heart, reward thy prayers and tears,
And make thee sing for joy,—that peace bestow
Which they who serve the Lord alone doth know.

SEEKING AFTER KNOWLEDGE.

WISDOM is the true currency of Heaven,
From fools withheld, but to the prudent giv'n;
In her pursuit let us in earnest be
If we would prosper; therefore, let us see
That all our energies be so combin'd
As best to cultivate the heart and mind.
This occupation is the best that can
Engage the youth, or occupy the man
In leisure hours, which, be they rightly spent,
Are of great moment, and by Heaven lent
To sweeten toil, and relaxation give
To dull and cank'ring cares, which, while we live,
Must be our lot; our time, then, let us spend
As best becomes us, knowing not our end!

CHRISTIAN, AWAKE!

CHRISTIAN, awake! thy life is not a dream,
You cannot glide for ever with the stream;
'Tis like the ocean in her changing moods
Of great uproar, or calm, deep solitudes;
Her varying tides a ceaseless motion keep,
And danger ever haunts the mighty deep;
Yet o'er her bosom in majestic pride
The noble vessel doth in safety ride,
Defying all the stormy winds that blow,—
Making a highway of a raging foe,
Till the bright haven doth appear in view,
Which speaks of rest to all the weary crew;
Where, sails all furl'd, anchor firm and fast,
They rest the sweeter for the dangers past!

PATIENCE.

PATIENCE! thou art a giant in thy strength,
A miracle of wonder-working power;
By calm endurance success crowns at length
As certain as the fruit succeeds the flower!
Patience—brave heart! 'tis step by step we go
And reach at last the haven of our hopes!
'Tis drop by drop—then hidden springs o'erflow
And rush in torrents down the mountain slopes!
'Tis one by one our moments swiftly fly
To form the deathless history of the past!
Then patiently pursue thy purpose high
While genius, hope, and emulation last.
Patience is true greatness!—e'en though defeat
Seem imminent, yet patience still is sweet!

JESUS, MY REFUGE.

OH, grateful shelter from the storms of life,
From cares corroding or vain worldly strife;
Fain would my panting soul Thy shadow seek,
And, shielded safe, in grateful accents speak
Of all Thy love to man, whose strength Thou art,
Whose refuge sure, the uplifter of the heart
Of him who strives to seek Thy safe retreat,
And loves with Thee to dwell—there at Thy feet
Lay sorrow's burden down; Thy gracious gift
Accepts with thankful heart, nor seeks to lift
With sinful hands once more the heavy load
That bars the soul's communion with his God;
Ah! there would I in calm repose abide,
Safe as THE ROCK near which I seek to hide,

TRUTH.

TRUTH is that spotless purity of soul
Which seeks the light, and loves to bask therein!
Not truth in part—then silence, but the whole
Unvarnished facts, without one taint of sin!
Such is the standard of the living God,
Before whom all that dares to lie must fall,
Feeling their conscience, like a heated rod,
Forever searing and consuming all!
Truth stands the test of torture, fire, or sword,
And from them all comes forth the more refin'd;
When fixed upon God's everlasting Word,—
Truth to all subtlety and art is blind;
Though tempted sore, yet utter not a lie,
For God and truth brave men have dar'd to die!

THE MASTER'S CALL.

GO work to-day! the fields are white to view,
The harvest truly great, the labour'rs few;
To you the call is giv'n, reapers, obey!
Work mightily, while yet 'tis called to-day!
For night approacheth when no man can work,
And sin and vice do in the darkness lurk.
The fields are many and the world is wide,
O'er trackless forests, deserts, stormy tide,
Proclaim THAT LOVE which makes all mankind kin,
And saves the soul though steep'd in direst sin;
Which frees the captive, gladdens the opprest,
And leads the erring to the Saviour's breast,
Where pard'ning mercy, love, and joy are giv'n
To make this earth a sweet foretaste of Heaven!

SLEEP.

SLEEP, blessed Sleep! of comforters the best,
Thou "sweet restorer" of a wearied frame;
In thy embrace we gladly sink to rest,
And thus forget earth's fickle praise or blame!
Or, in our dreams, revisit other lands
Where first our happy childhood's years were spent,
And join in playful glee our toil-worn hands
In youthful happiness and sweet content;
Or kneel beside a godly mother's knee
And lisp again our evening prayer sublime,
And feel, from all our care and trouble free,
The flowery freshness of life's glad spring-time!
Sleep's but the emblem of our long last rest,
If pillow'd safely on our Saviour's breast!

THE LAST ENEMY.

DEATH comes to all, no man can stay his hand;
If he but calls, the proudest in the land
His summons must obey, and then be led
By his cold, icy hand 'mong silent dead;
There to remain till Death himself shall die,
And He who conquered Death shall reign on high.
Oh, Death! where is thy sting if Jesus save?
Where, then, thy victory, O cruel grave?
Thou hast no power o'er him whom God defends,
For him all things subserve most glorious ends.
Death but relieves from earthly pain and woe,
A friend, though in the guise of mortal foe.
Oh, may the grave to me be but a door.
To that bright land where Death shall reign no more!

PERSEVERANCE.

DISAPPOINTMENT is not utter failure,
The "striving" is a measure of success;
Each wise attempt but makes us stronger grow,
Till, oft-repeated, stumbling-blocks seem less,
And finally prove stepping-stones to gain
The end in view, and our fond hopes attain!
As drops of water wear the solid rock,
Or sun's bright ray, in focus, kindle flame,
So concentrated effort, wisely spent,
Will yet be crowned with success and with fame!
If that thy aim be good, then persevere,
Though success fail thee, this thy heart may cheer:
No man e'er strove with noble end in view,
But from the strife came forth more brave and true!

CONSCIENCE.

CONSCIENCE is the true monitor of God
For our approval, or a very rod
Of direst chastisement for evil deeds,
Or wicked thoughts that grow like noxious weeds
Within the garden of the human heart,
To mar the buds and flowers which would impart
A fragrant solace to the weary soul
Of God-made man, thus strengthen and control
His better nature in Temptation's day,
And drive the hateful thoughts of sin away,
To hide themselves for very shame of sin,
And, hence renewed, the better life begin:
Thus, Conscience, listen'd to, will safely guide
Where perfect peace and happiness abide!

LIGHT.

GOD said: "Let there be light," and from the sky
Shone forth the "ruler of the day" on high;
To rule the darkness of chaotic night
He sent the moon forth with her silvery light.
Soon countless stars peep'd out as if to see
The new creation in its infancy!
Then God made man in His own image fair,
And gave him Eve his earthly joys to share;
But man's sad fall from purity and grace
Brought spiritual darkness o'er the human race.
"I AM THE LIGHT," our blessed Saviour said,
And meekly bow'd for us His holy head;
A heavenly light He shed o'er life's dark way,
Shining more bright as nears the perfect day!

PLEADING.

OH ! theme of wondrous power !—with God to plead—
And speak to Him in our great times of need !
With faith's bright eye peer through earth's darkest night
And read the meaning of the Infinite !
Oh ! gift of gifts ! to erring mortals given—
Kneeling on earth, yet, kneeling, soar to Heaven !
To lisp and stammer, yet prevail with God
To turn aside from us his chastening rod !
More liberty with God than angels know
Have they who seek His ear in time of woe !
Claiming the merits of a Saviour's love
To gain a hearing in the courts above !
He who doth mark each sparrow's fall with care
Counts all our tears, and answers fervent prayer !

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